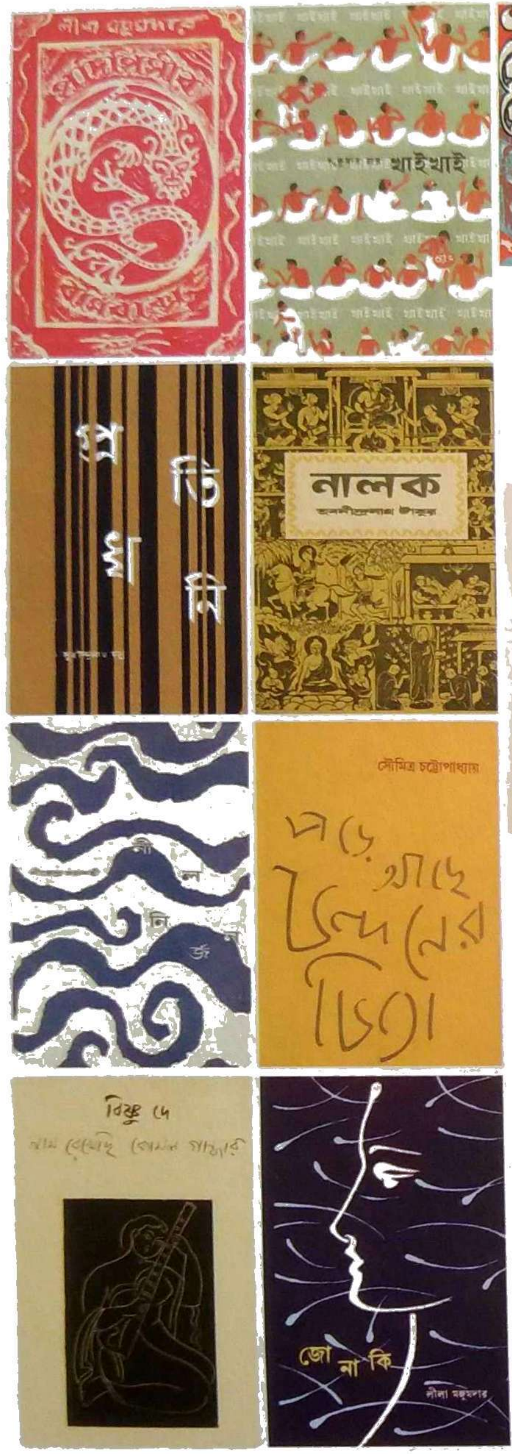
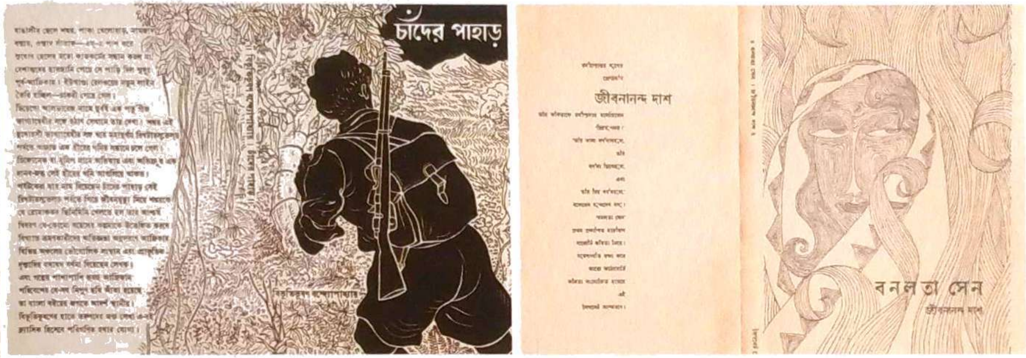
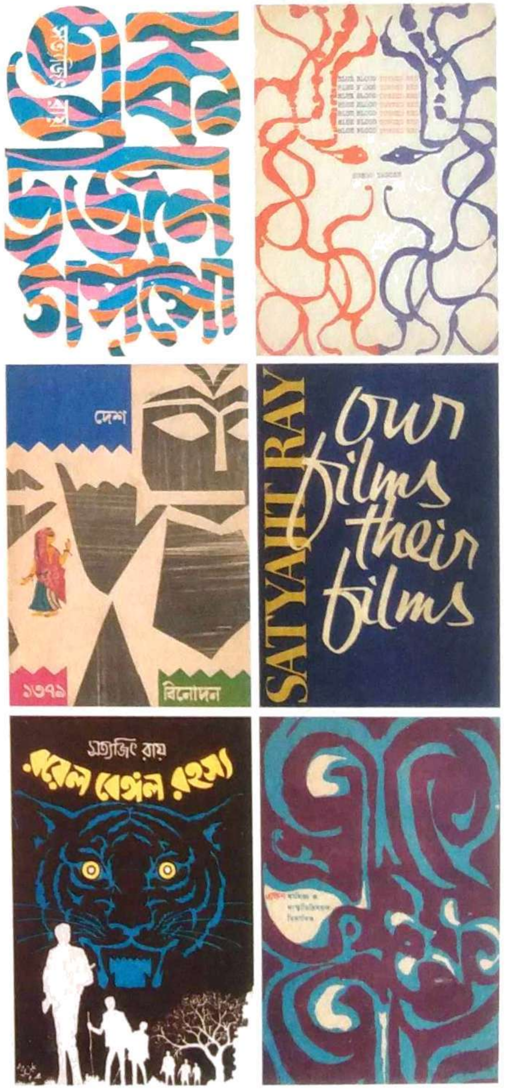


STARMARK CALENDAR 2022



RAY (UN)COVERED



All artworks by Satyajit Ray © Society for the Preservation of Satyajit Ray Archives

Calendar curated by **Sandip Ray**

Calendar design and text by **Pinaki De** | Archival assistance from **Riddhi Goswami**

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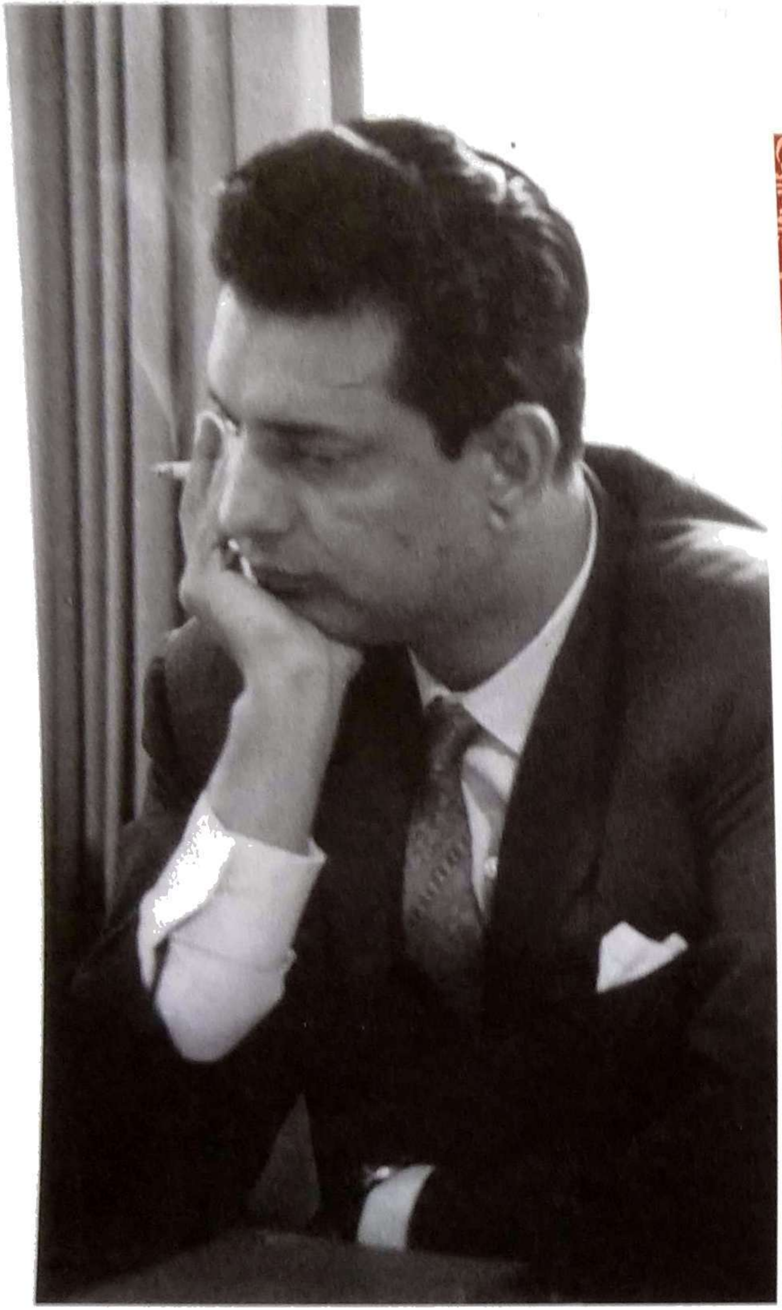
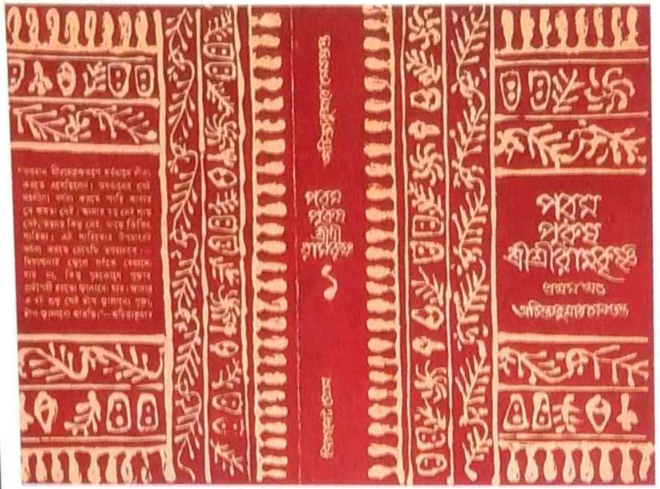


RAY AS A BOOK COVER ARTIST



Parampurush Sri Sri Ramakrishna (Signet Press, 1952)

Aam Antir Bhepu (Signet Press, 1945)

'In 1943, DK Gupta launched a publishing concern which he called Signet Press. I was roped in to design book jackets while DK himself looked after the production. The first set of Bengali books that Signet brought out created a sensation in the publishing world. My own contribution was not insignificant as I used, for the first time in books, traditional Bengali motifs on the jackets, sometimes with an illustration in brush or pen.'

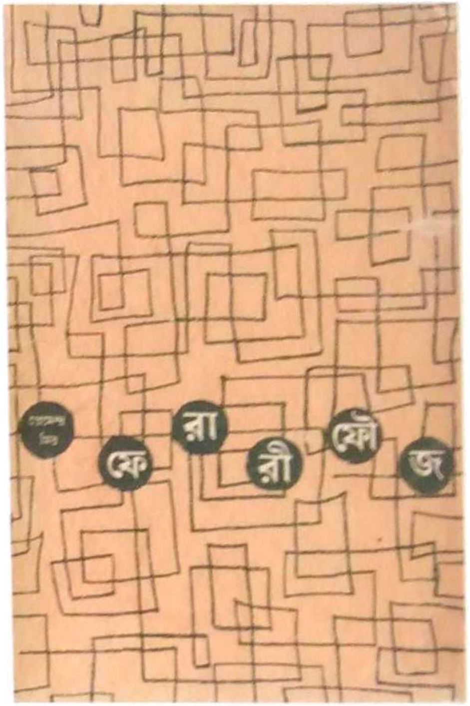
Khirer Putul (Signet Press, 1944)

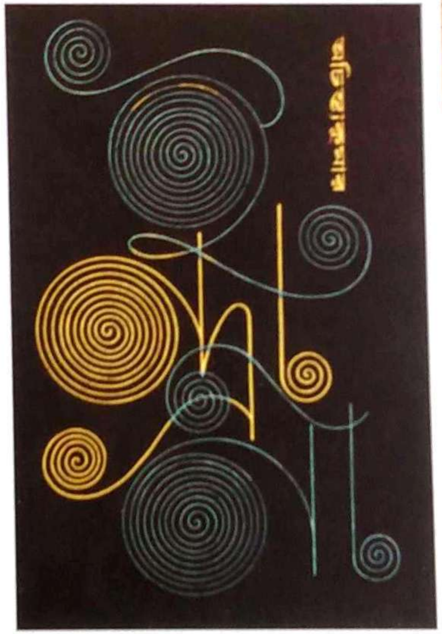
Some of the book covers of Signet Press where traditional Bengali motifs were used by Ray include *Parampurush Sri Sri Ramakrishna*, *Aam Antir Bhepu* and *Khirer Putul*.

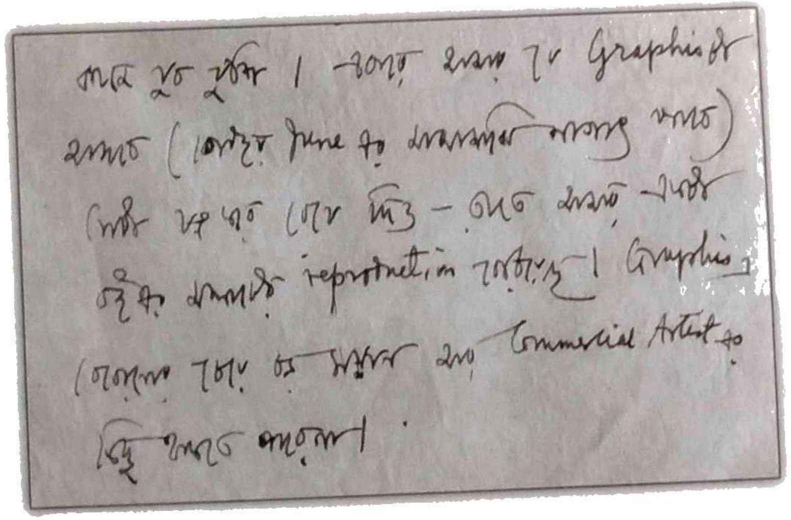
INTERNATIONAL RECOGNITION

At a landmark exhibition in London, titled 'The Art of the Book Jacket', hosted by the Victoria and Albert Museum in 1949–50, showcasing 460 exhibits from 24 countries*—three humble entries from Signet Press, Calcutta stood out with their arresting understatement. They were Premendra Mitra's collection of poems, *Ferari Fouj* (Signet Press, 1946), Lila Majumdar's short story collection, *Din Dupure* (Signet Press, 1948) and Achintya Kumar Sengupta's novel, *Indrani* (Signet Press, 1949), all designed by a man who was to take the world by storm in 1955 with his debut feature film, *Pather Panchali*.

* Peter Floud and Charles Rosner, "The Book Jacket Comes of Age", *Graphis*, Vol. 6, No. 29 (1950), pp. 14–25.



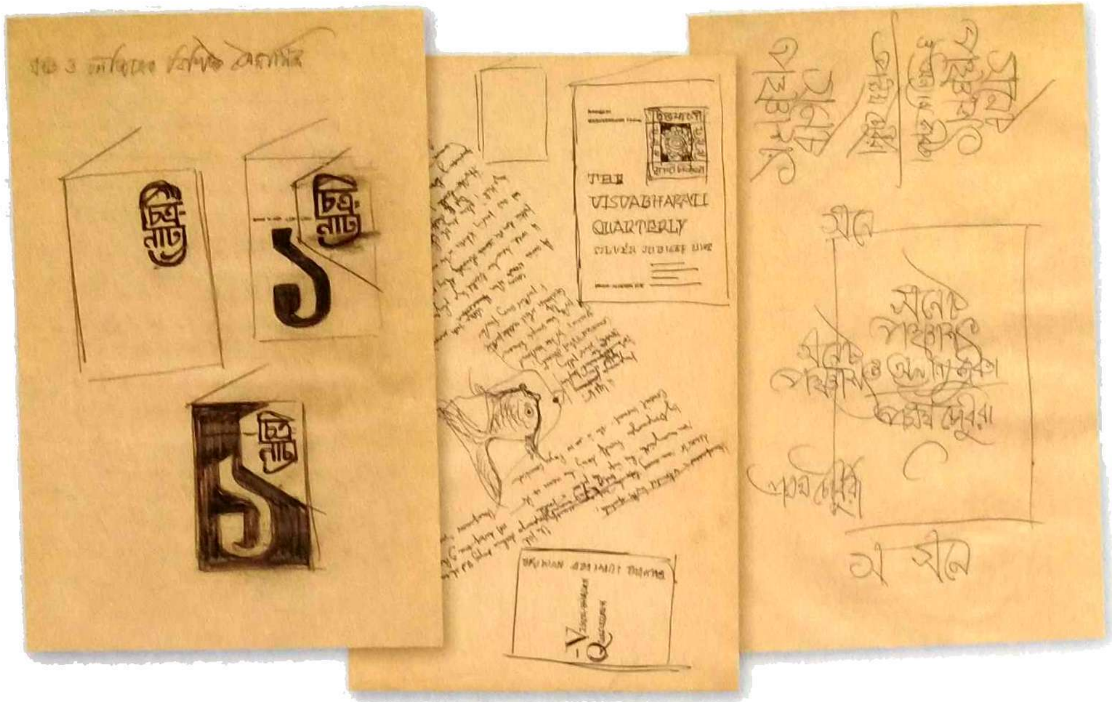




Left: Ray wrote to his mother about his happiness at his book covers being published in the *Graphis* magazine. [Letter dated 21 May, 1950]

The translation of a part of the letter is as follows:
'I feel very happy today. The issue of *Graphis* that you will receive around mid-June has a reproduction of my book cover. Keep it with care. Nothing can be more honourable for a commercial artist than to be published in *Graphis*'

Above far left: *Din Dupure* (Signet Press, 1948)
Above: *Ferari Fouj* (Signet Press, 1946)
Left: *Indrani* (Signet Press, 1949)



Some drafts of covers for periodicals and books in his famous *kheror khata*

'The books that Ray designed for the now defunct Signet Press way back in the early 1950s set new trends and were considered as models for book production both in terms of page layout, typography and jacket design, the last being his chosen field where his innovations have known no bounds. The covers of the well-known literary magazine *Ekshan* which he had been designing for many years, to give only one instance, bear ample testimony to his apparently playful but significant experiments with the forms of three Bengali letters which constitute the name of the magazine.'

—PARITOSH SEN

'In many of Ray's designs, one can find broad hints of the traditional art form. These can be described as a highly sophisticated folk art. Added to these are the subtle reflections of refined taste imbibed through an aristocratic ancestry. The interesting fusion of primitive force and elegant simplicity has been from the beginning an important ingredient of Satyajit Ray's creations.'

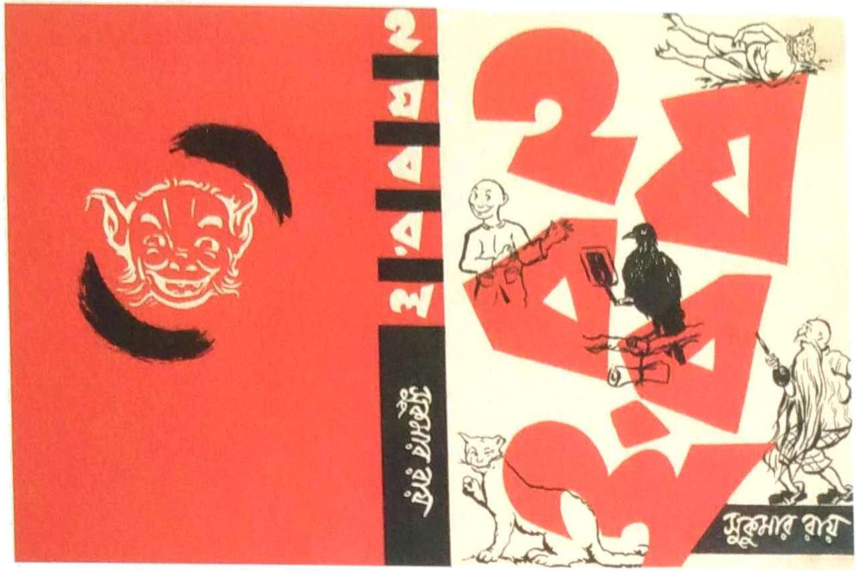
—RAGHUNATH GOSWAMY

'Apart from being a filmmaker and writer, my father shared a lifelong passion for graphic art. While designing a book cover, he used to place a tracing paper on the pen-and-ink drawing and thereupon used poster colours to give the final look. Many times he used to scribble with pastel colours on a separate sheet to indicate the exact shade he wanted if the poster colour got dry by chance. I hope this selection of book covers will once again showcase the amazing talent of Satyajit Ray as an artist par excellence.'

—SANDIP RAY

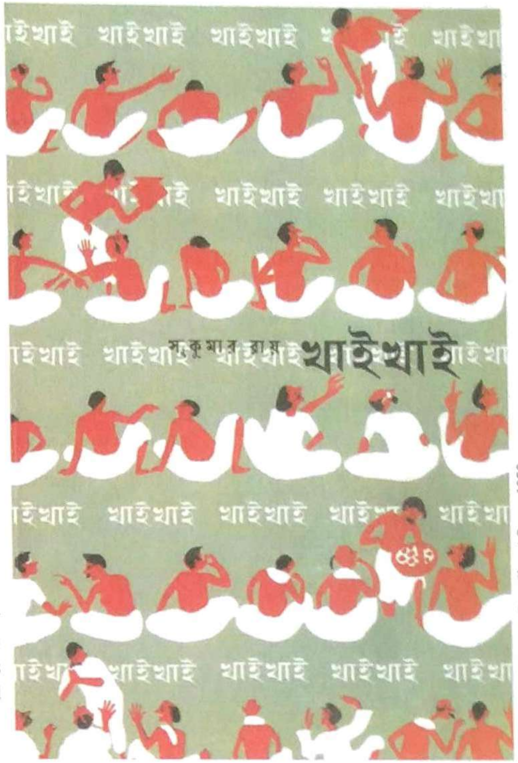
THE LEGACY

Tuntunir Boi by Upendrakishore Ray Chowdhury; Signet Press, 1955



Hajabarala by Sukumar Ray; Signet Press, 1945

Ray inherited the legacy of his grandfather and father, Upendrakishore Ray Chowdhury and Sukumar Ray who were accomplished illustrators. While redoing the cover of *Tuntunir Boi*, he creates a fairy-tale ambience by fusing animal figures with subtle decorative elements; in *Hajabarala*, he reuses Sukumar's illustrations with vertically stacked bold red lettering; in *Khai Khai*, he uses different figures in horizontal rows in order to recreate a repetitive pattern which metaphorically alludes to the title.

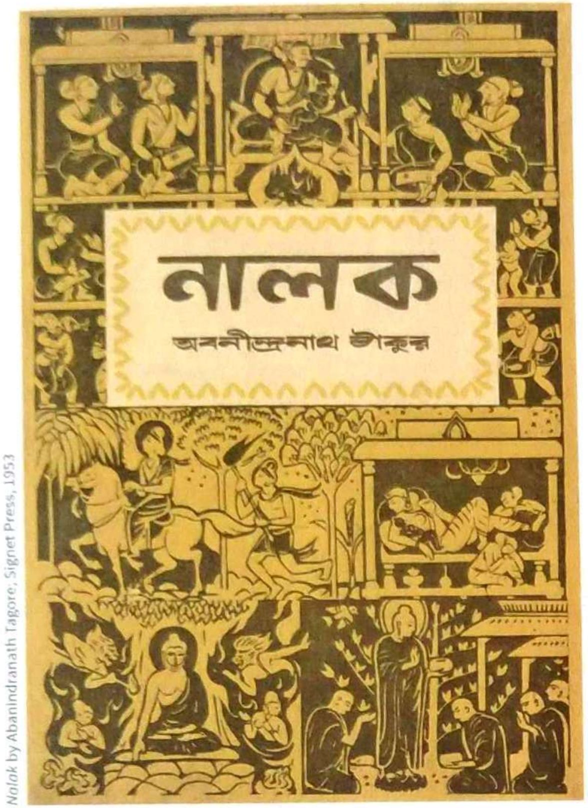


Khai Khai by Sukumar Ray; Signet Press, 1950

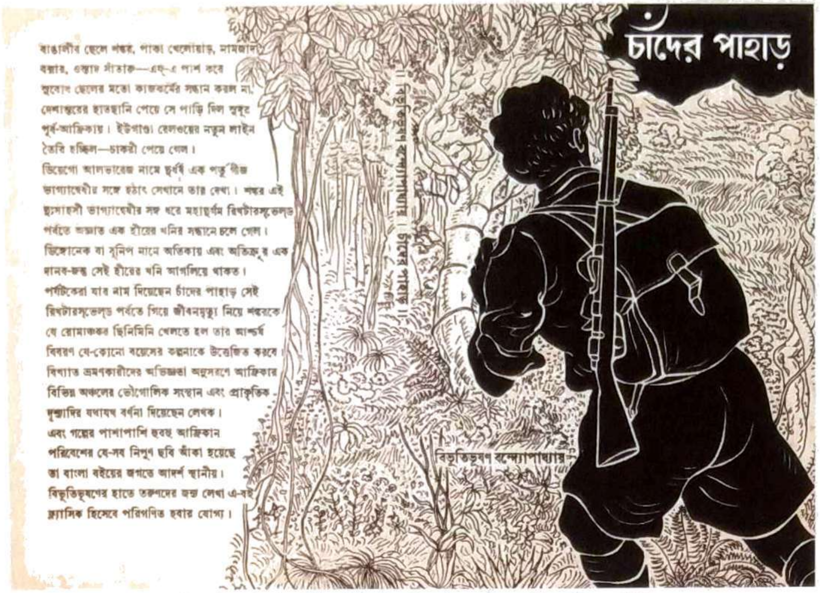
2022 JANUARY

MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT	SUN
31					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30

THE CLASSICS: REDUX

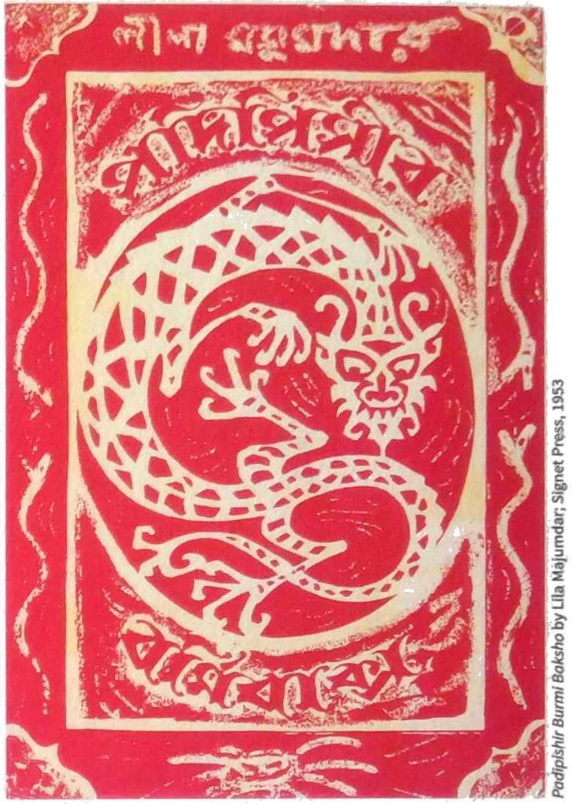


Nalak by Abanindranath Tagore, Signet Press, 1953



Chander Pahar by Bibhutibhushan Bandyopadhyay; Signet Press, 1955

In *Nalak*, Ray adapts the 'dry fresco' style of Ajanta paintings to depict the life of Buddha; in *Chander Pahar,* he uses the black silhouetted figure of the protagonist against a meticulously drawn background of foliages hinting at the setting of the story; in *Padipishir Barmi Baksho,* he recreates the design of an antique Burmese box with an inscribed dragon against a red background.



Padipishir Barmi Baksho by Lila Majumdar; Signet Press, 1953

2022 FEBRUARY

MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT	SUN
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
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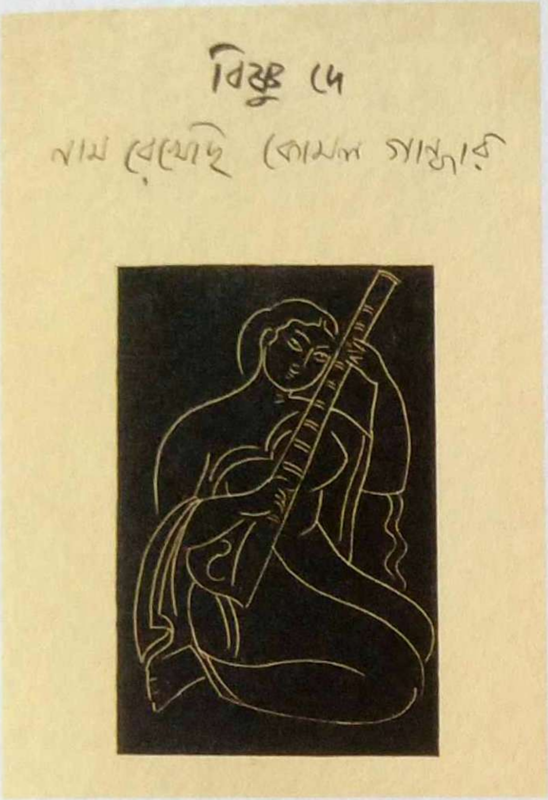
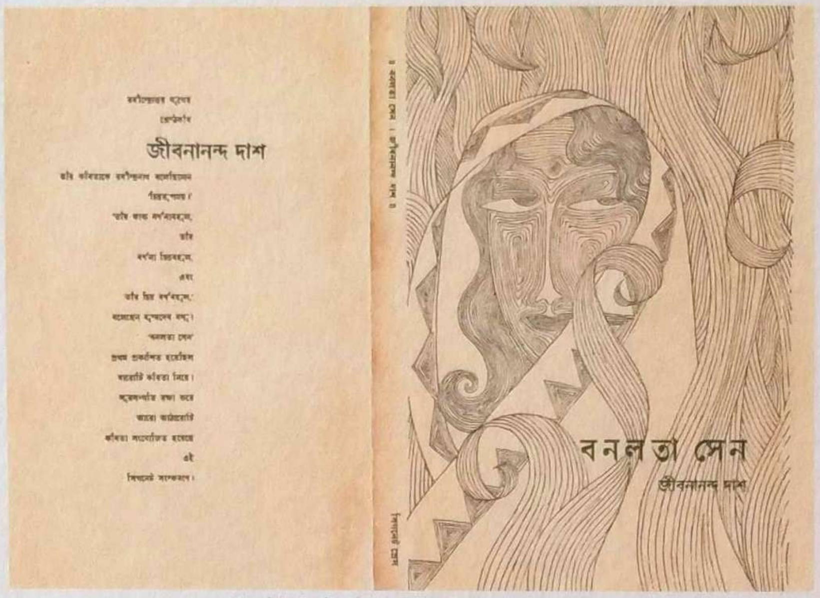
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28						

POETIC JUSTICE

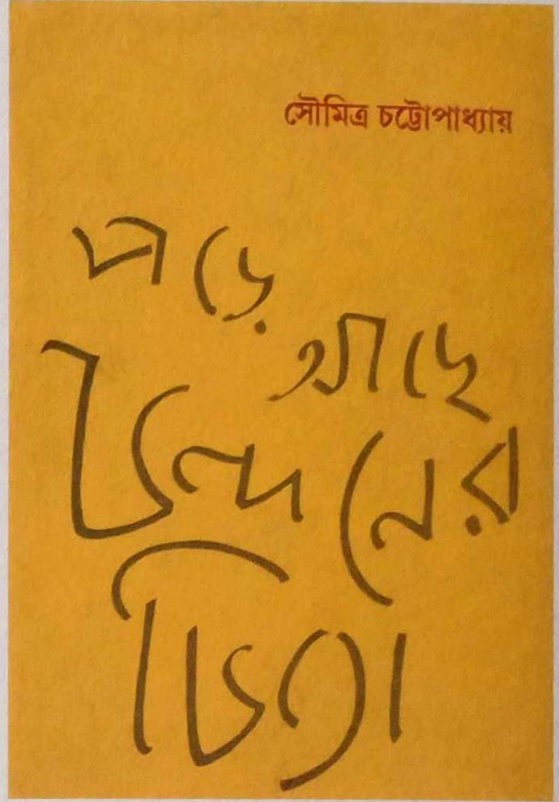


Naam Rekhechhi Komal Gandhar by Bishnu Dey; Signet Press, 1953



Banalata Sen by Jibanananda Das; Signet Press, 1952

Ray's aesthetics of design intertexuality can be seen in the covers for poetry books. In *Naam Rekhechhi Komal Gandhar*, he alludes to the Kalighat *pat* while drawing the central figurine; in *Banalata Sen,* the dark, mysterious visage of the lady bears an uncanny resemblance to Tagore's paintings of female profiles; in *Pore Achhe Chandaner Chita*, he brings out the metaphor of the collection through stunning calligraphy.



Pore Achhe Chandaner Chita by Soumitra Chattopadhyay; Biswabani Prakashani, 1983

2022 MARCH

MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT	SUN
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
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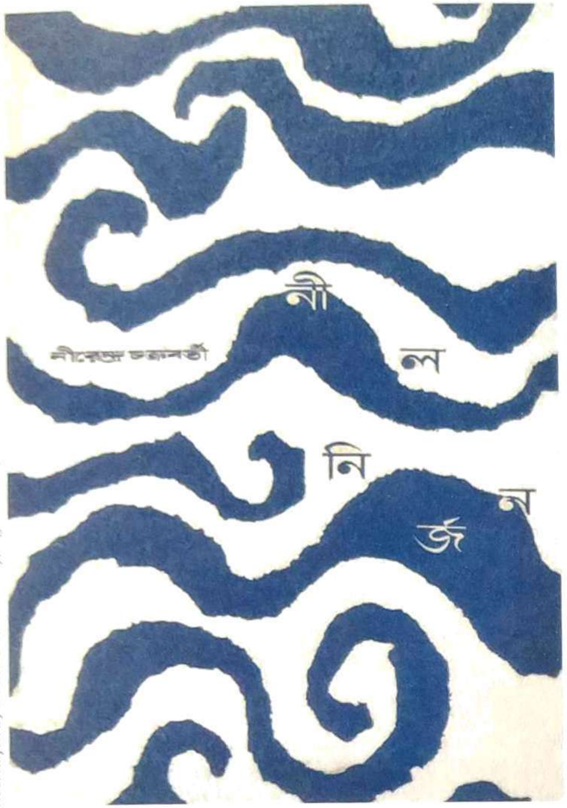
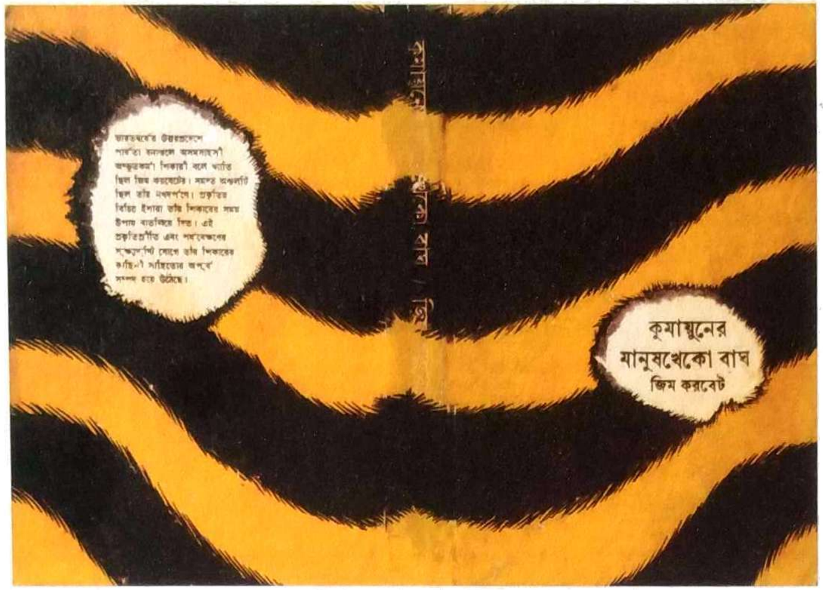
PLAY IN PATTERNS

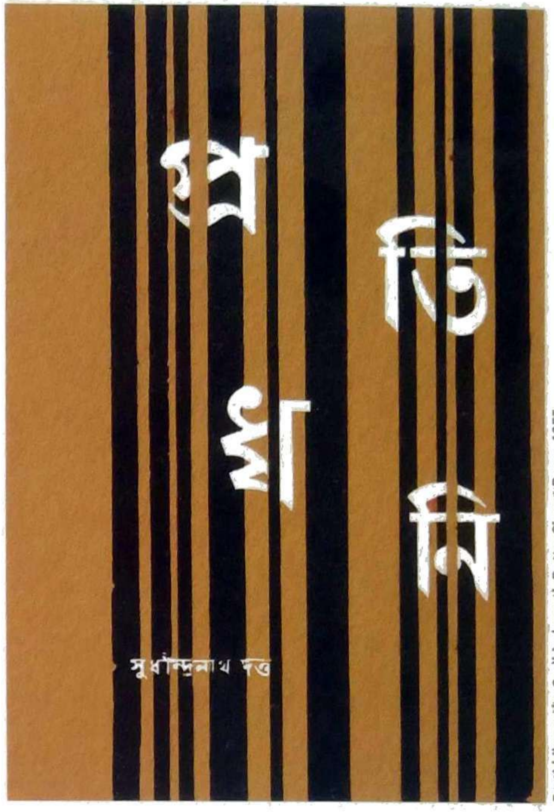


Neel Nirjon by Nirendra Chakraborty; Signet Press, 1954



Kumauner Manushkheko Baagh by Jim Corbett; Signet Press, 1953

In *Neel Nirjon*, Ray creates the motif of the waves with patterns off the negative space; in *Kumauner Manushkheko Baagh* bullet holes though the hide of the tiger evokes the theme of the book; the vertical sound bars along with the dislocated title fonts in *Pratiddhwani,* makes it a true masterpiece.



Pratiddhwani by Sudhindranath Dutta; Signet Press, 1955

2022 APRIL

MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT	SUN
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
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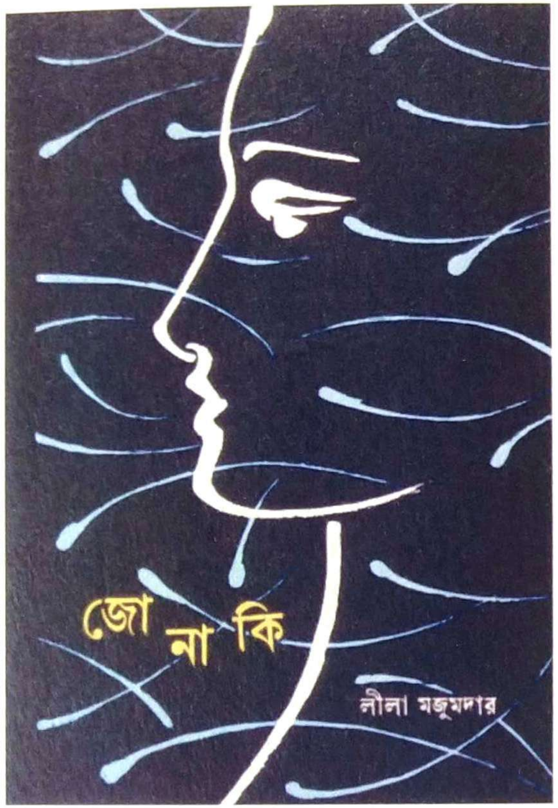
25	26	27	28	29	30	

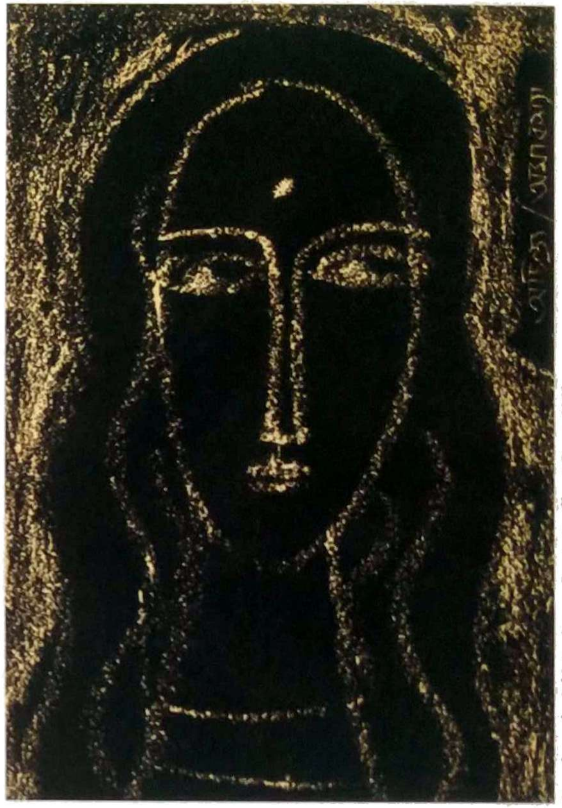
COLOURS – DARK AND BOLD!



Jonaki by Lila Majumdar; Signet Press, 1955

Nokol Durgo by Sachin Bhowmick; Deepjyoti Prakashani, 1955

In *Jonaki*, wisps of white brushstrokes depict the movement of glowing fireflies against the deep blue background of the night; in *Aamabasya*, Ray uses a white pastel outline on black paper to draw a face, but in a sly act of defiance, fills up the background with chalk-like whiteness; in *Nokol Durgo*, Ray draws a dark blue house against the red sky, making the cover speak though his use of bold colours.



Aamabasya by Achintya Kumar Sengupta; Signet Press, 1953

2022 MAY

MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT	SUN
30	31					1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
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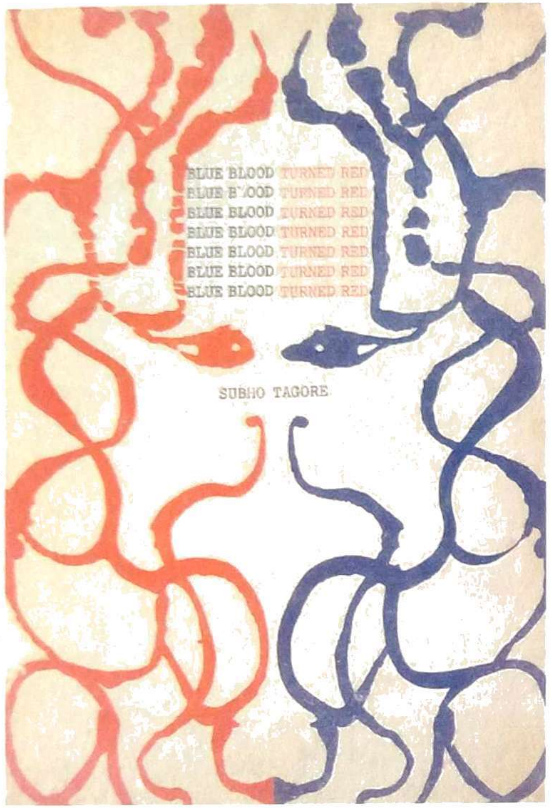
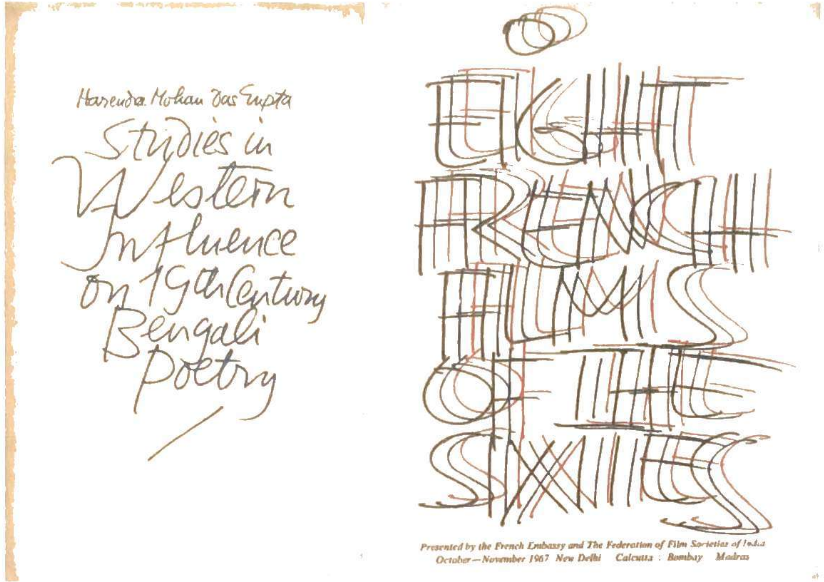
23	24	25	26	27	28	29

DESIGNING COVERS IN ENGLISH

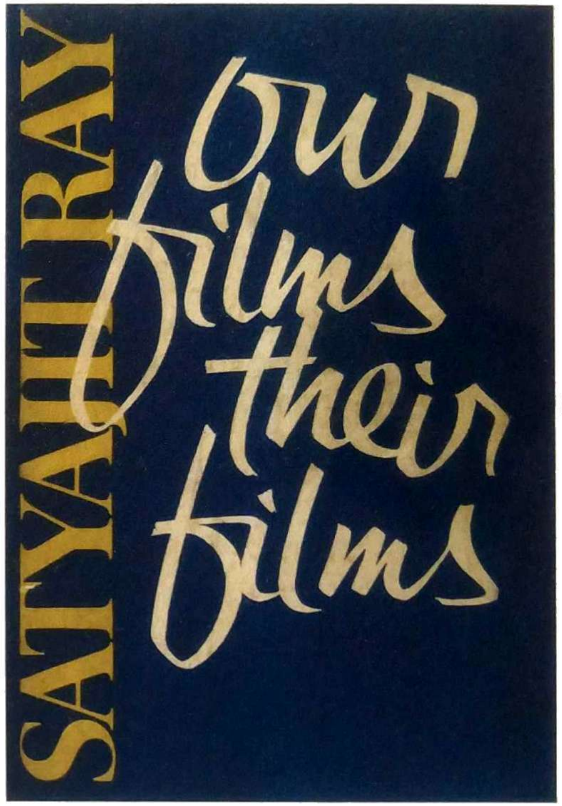


Blue Blood Turned Red by Subho Tagore, Century Press, 1953



[Above left] *Studies in Western Influence on 19th Century Bengali Poetry* by Harendra Mohan Das Gupta; Semushi, 1969
[Above right] *Eight French Films of the Sixties;* The French Embassy and The Federation of Film Societies of India, 1967

Ray didn't design many covers for English books, yet his mastery can be seen in the few he did. In Subho Tagore's *Blue Blood Turned Red*, the inky trail from the nibs of two pens in two defining colours converge to hint at the portrait of the bearded author-artist. His skillful English calligraphy in various books shows that he was equally proficient in English letter art as he was in his native Bengali.



Our Films Their Films by Satyajit Ray; Orient Longman, 1976

2022 JUNE

MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT	SUN
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6	7	8	9	10	11	12
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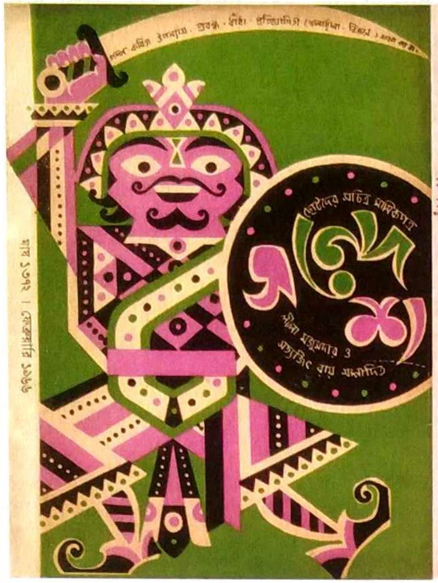
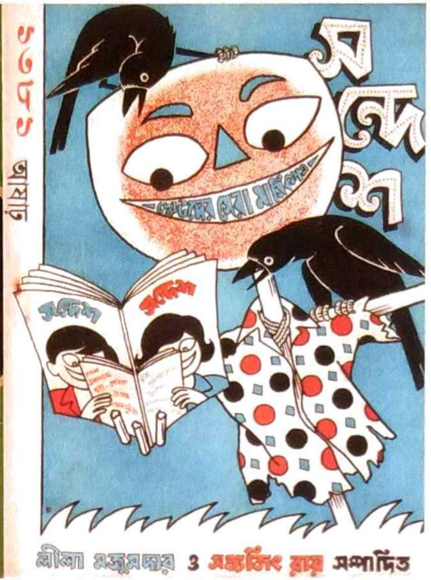
27	28	29	30			

THE PHOENIX RESURRECTED

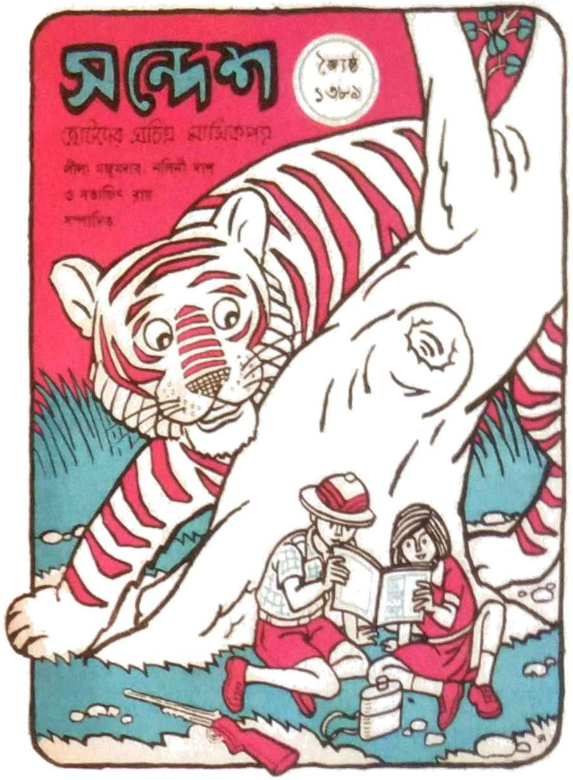
Sandesh, November 1969





[Above left] *Sandesh*, February 1966; [Above right] *Sandesh*, July 1974

In 1961, *Sandesh* was revived under the editorialship of Satyajit Ray and Subhas Mukhopadhyay. Ray took up the challenge to create colourful covers for the magazine which have since attained cult status. Since the magazine is mainly aimed at a young readership, Ray took the liberty of using myriad illustration styles to create an interesting body of work.



Sandesh, June 1982

2022 JULY

MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT	SUN
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
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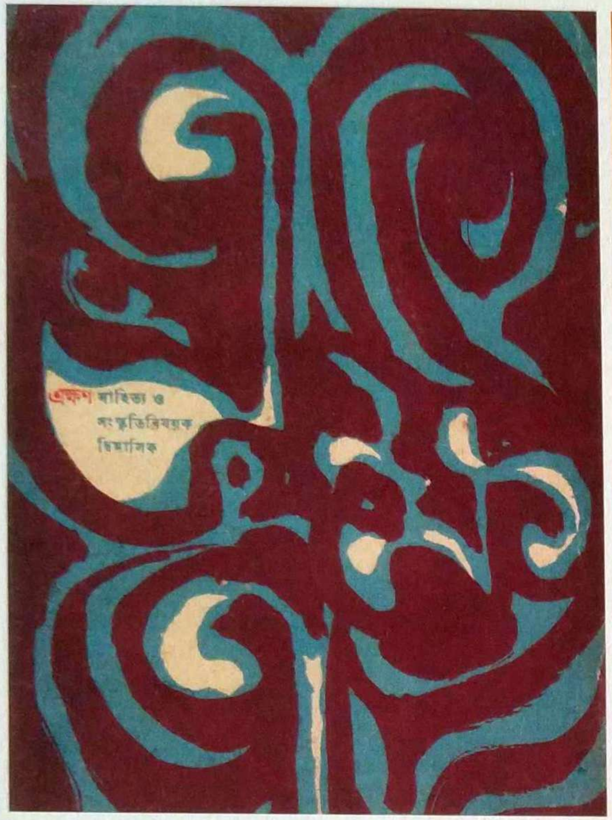
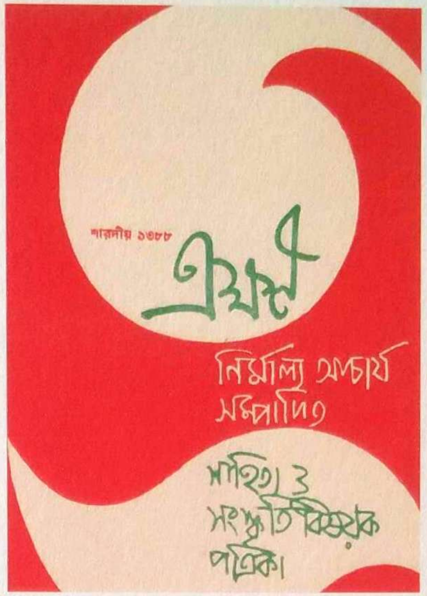
25	26	27	28	29	30	31

THE MIND OF A DESIGNER

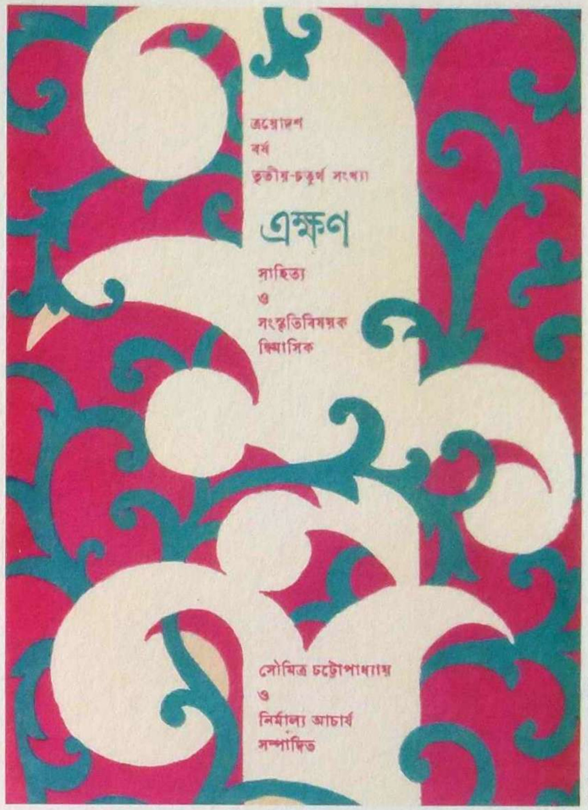


Ekshan, 1976, Issue 1-2



[Above left] *Ekshan*, Winter-Spring 1985; [Above right] *Ekshan*, Puja Annual, 1981

Ray creates a unique visual index when he designs the many covers of *Ekshan*, the well-known Bengali little magazine edited by Soumitra Chatterjee and Nirmalya Acharyya. He plays with the three-letter forms of the title to pay tribute to different art movements across the world, whether Baroque, Expressionism, the British Arts and Crafts Movement, Constructivism or the *alpana*, which was formalized as an art form in Santiniketan.

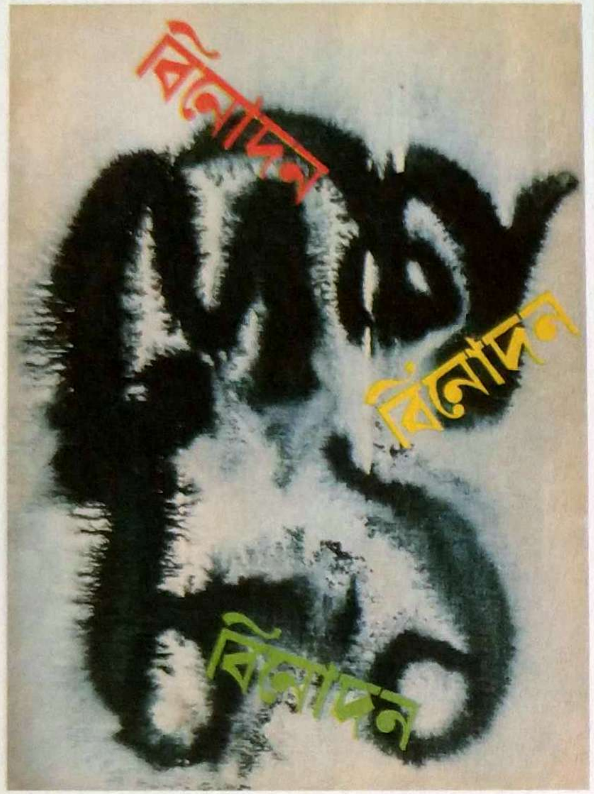


Ekshan, Jume 1978

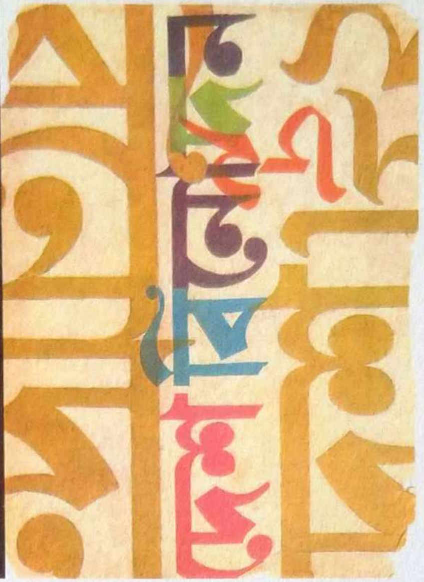
2022 AUGUST

MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT	SUN
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30	31				

STYLISED EXPERIMENTATIONS

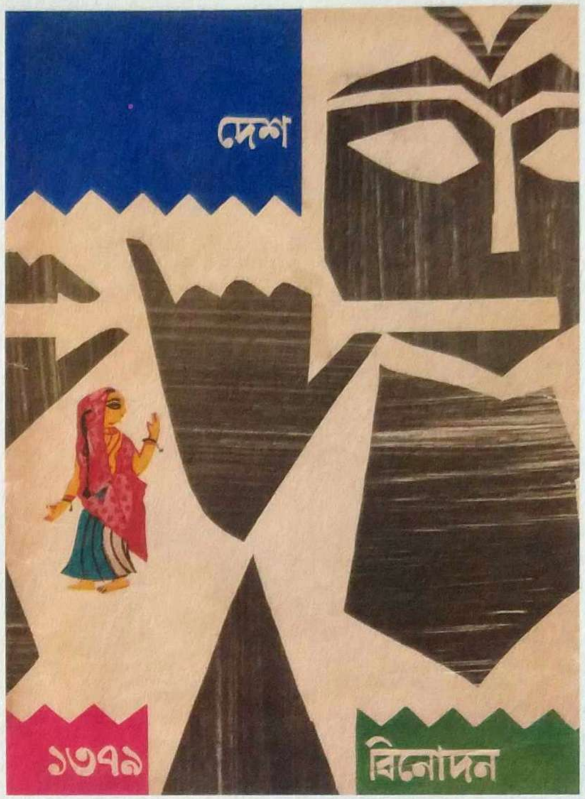


Desh Binodon, 1974



[Above left] *Desh Binodon*, 1973; [Above right] *Desh Binodon*, 1975

In the cover of the *Desh Binodon* 1974 issue, Ray uses shades of the Japanese wash technique to create the desired fluid lettering, an example of how his calligraphy could be whimsically radical if the occasion demanded; in the 1973 and 1975 issues, he plays with calligraphy and vertically placed overlapping assymetric typefaces respectively; in the *Desh Binodon* 1972 issue, the collage technique is used to stunning effect in order to create the figure of Krishna with the flute.

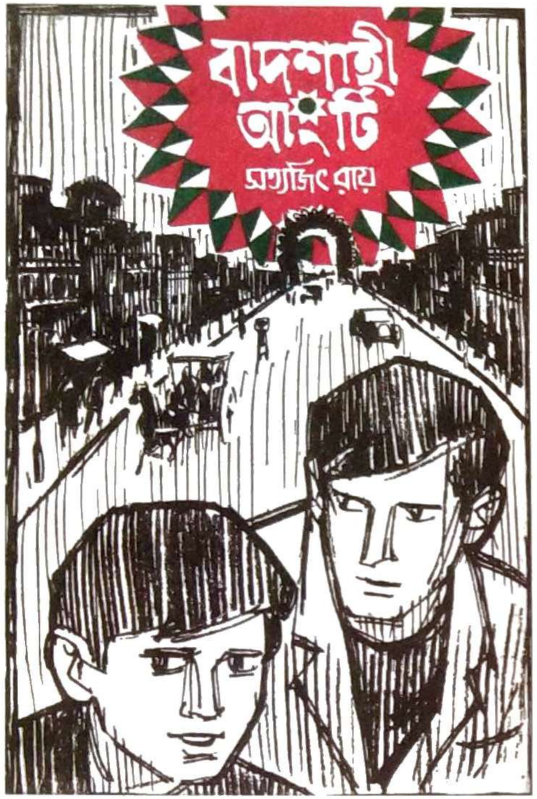


Desh Binodon, 1972

2022 SEPTEMBER

MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT	SUN
			1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30		

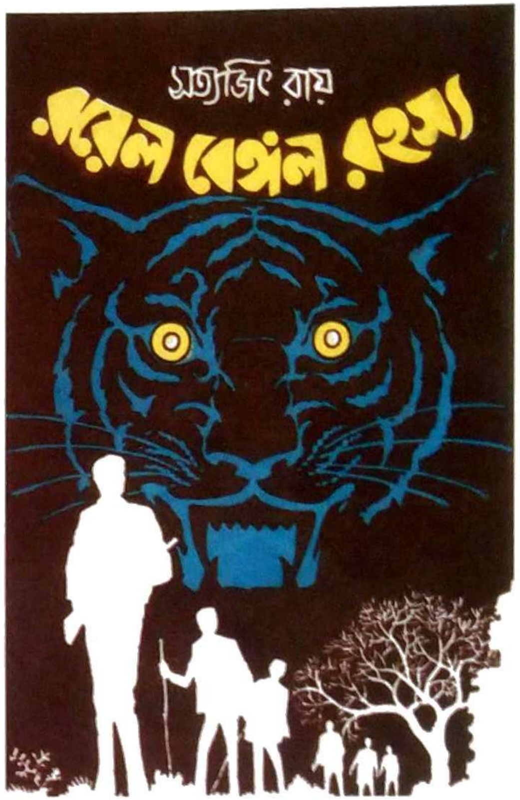
CREATING A CULT



Badshahi Aangti; Ananda Publishers, 1969

[Above left] *Kailashe Kelenkari*; Ananda Publishers, 1974; [Above centre] *Joto Kando Kathmandute*; Ananda Publishers, 1982; [Above right] *Tintorettor Jishu*; Ananda Publishers, 1983;

For the cult character of Feluda, Ray used a variety of illustration techniques to foreground Feluda's heroic presence along with Topshe and Lalmohan Ganguly, his companions in the adventures. A strong sense of place where these respective adventures take place is incorporated through various motifs in order to provide a background framework to the compositions.

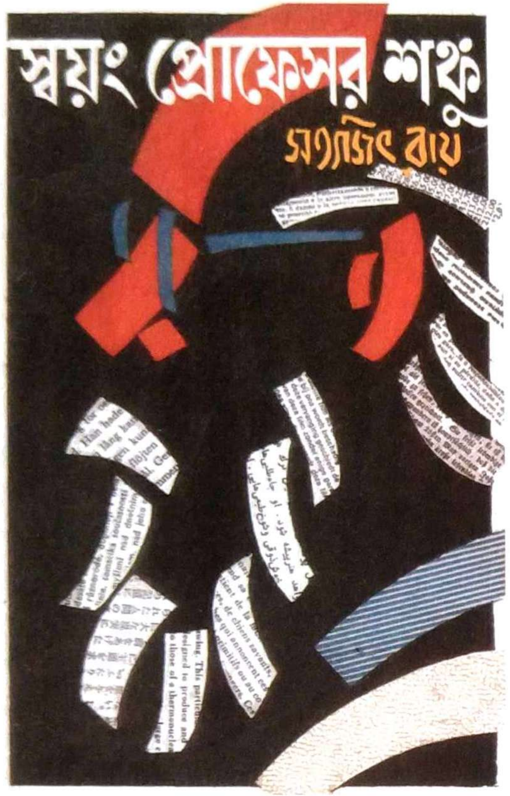


Royal Bengal Rahasya; Ananda Publishers, 1975

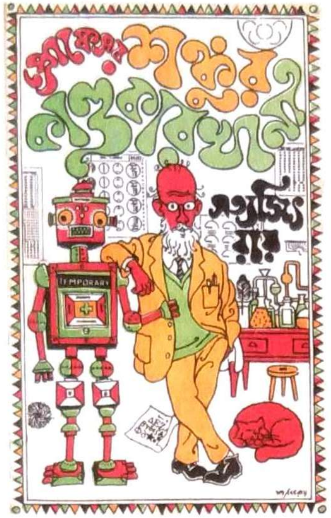
2022 OCTOBER

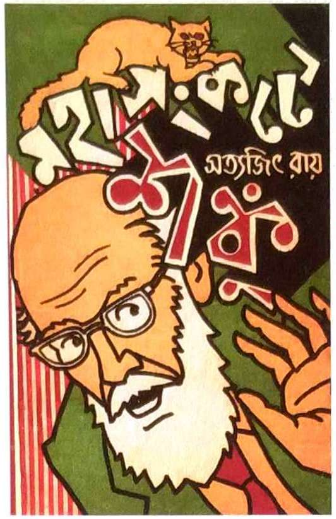
MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT	SUN
31					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30

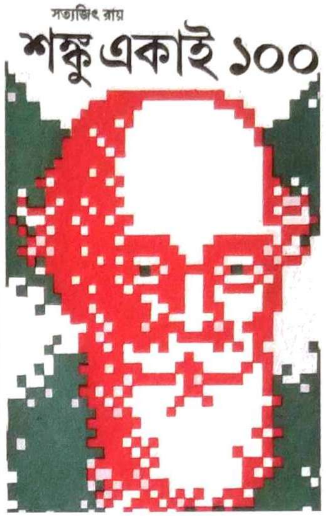
FLIGHTS OF FANCY



Swayang Professor Shonku; Ananda Publishers, 1980

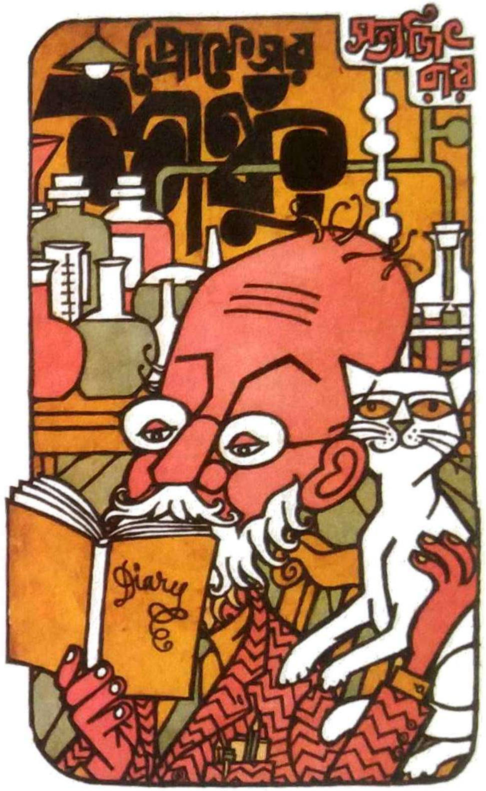






[Above left] *Professor Shonkur Kandokarkhana;* Ananda Publishers, 1970; [Above centre] *Mahasankate Shonku;* Ananda Publishers, 1977; [Above right] *Shonku Ekai 100;* Ananda Publishers, 1983;

In the case of Professor Shonku, Ray adopts the same strategy as the Feluda covers. Keeping the character in focus, he weaves various elements associated with his scientific exploits. Particularly two covers deserve special mention. In *Swayang Professor Shonku,* he creates a collage with torn papers from scientific journals; in *Shonku Ekai 100,* he recreates the pixellated look of the Professor—a stunning achievement in the pre-computer era.



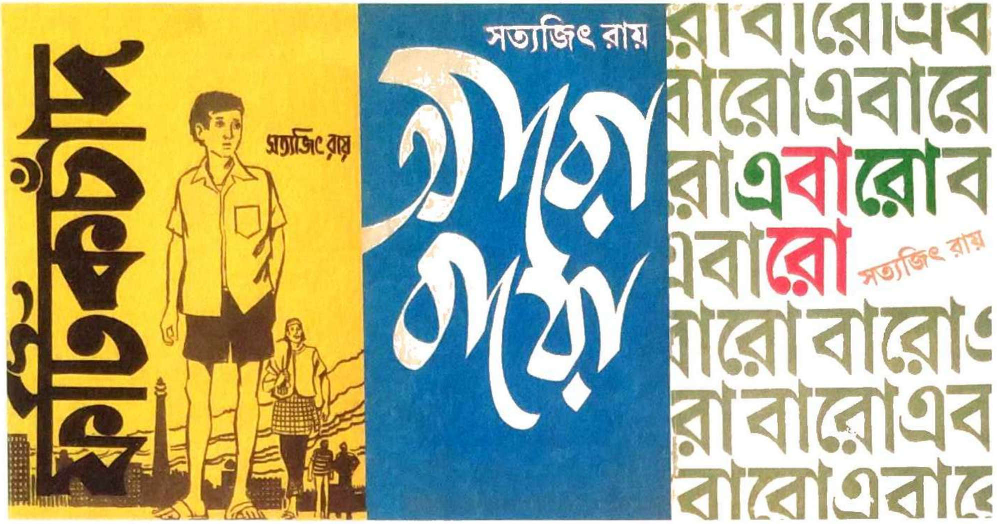
Professor Shonkur Diary; New Script, 1965

2022 NOVEMBER

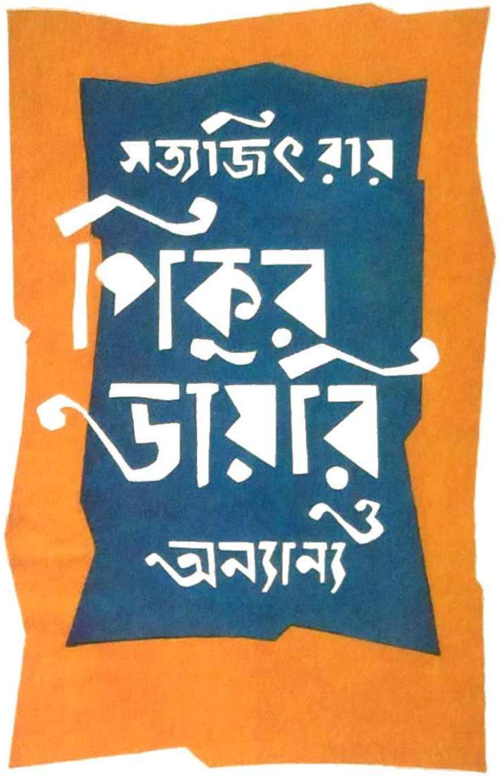
MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT	SUN
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30				

A HEADY MIX

Ek Dojon Goppo, Ananda Publishers, 1970



[Above left] *Phatikchand*; Ananda Publishers, 1976; [Above centre] *Aaro Baro*; Ananda Publishers, 1981;
[Above right] *Ebaro Baro*; Ananda Publishers, 1984;



Pikur Diary o Ananyo; Ananda Publishers, 1986

Ray's other fictional works have signature covers created by him that have endured the test of time. A special mention can be made about his anthologies of shorter fiction. Every volume contains 12 such stories, and that led Ray to play with the word 'baro' which in Bengali means twelve. The seven 12 series books are a testimony to Ray's deep understanding of Bengali type and calligraphy.

2022 DECEMBER

MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT	SUN
			1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30	31	